

Aim The purpose of the Organization, as set out in Article 1 of its constitution, is "the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health". Its constitution and activities embrace the principle of universality of membership and recognize the universality of need, on the premise that disease respects no national boundaries, that no country in the world, whatever its degree of development, is without its important health problems, and that differences lie only in the relative degrees of priority of problems and in the resources that are available for their solution. Thus there are no restrictions on membership and, indeed, no provision for withdrawal from the Organization.

Structure and activities The WHO functions through three main organs:

- (1) The *World Health Assembly (WHA)*, the supreme governing body, meets annually; all members are entitled to send delegates. The WHA decides on policies, programs and budgets, and adopts necessary international measures.
- (2) The *Executive Board*, the executive body of the Health Assembly, meets twice a year. It consists of 24 persons designated by as many member states elected by the Assembly. Eight members are elected each year for a three-year period. A technical and non-political organ, it prepares the work of the Assembly and gives effect to its decisions.
- (3) The *Secretariat*, headed by the Director-General, implements the decisions of the Assembly and the Board.

The permanent headquarters of the Organization are located on Avenue Appia, Geneva, Switzerland.

Planning and execution of field activities are decentralized in six Regional Committees, which serve the Americas, Southeast Asia, Europe, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Pacific and Africa. Their respective headquarters are in Washington, New Delhi, Copenhagen, Alexandria, Manila and Brazzaville. All member states belong to one of the Regional Committees, each of which meets annually to plan a program of work for the countries in its region. The regional programs, with budget estimates, are submitted for inclusion in the Director-General's program and budget estimates, which he places before the Executive Board and the Health Assembly for approval.

An exception is the Pan-American Health Organization, which functions as the health agency in the Americas of the Organization of American States. With the establishment of the WHO in 1948, it